

*Washington, DC* - Citing the latest steam leak from underground pipes at the Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant, U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY) renewed his call for the plant to replace all underground pipes as a condition for the renewal of the plant's operating license.

"Recent leaks at Indian Point indicate the potential for a serious public safety problem," said Rep. Hall. Hall represents the 19th Congressional District, which includes the nuclear power plant, located in Buchanan. "Indian Point's aging underground infrastructure must be a major consideration before considering the plant's re-licensing application before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. This most recent leak is another example of why corroding metal pipes, buried out of sight for thirty-six years, must be replaced before Indian Point is considered for operation beyond 2013, when the plant's 40-year operating license for Indian Point 2 is set to expire. With eight percent of the U.S. population living within 50 miles of Indian Point, any breakdown there could be catastrophic. It's time that the NRC stand up for the safety of New Yorkers."

On March 8, a steam leak occurred in a section of pipe carrying auxiliary steam at Indian Point. Steam was observed coming up through the gravel that covers the ground surface area between Units 2 and 3, directly above the buried pipe. This section of piping was being placed in service during a refueling outage. Entergy, which owns and operates the Indian Point plants, estimated the leak could have existed for up to 50 minutes before the flow of steam to the pipe was shut off. Entergy officials have stated that the steam contained low levels of tritium. The leak at Indian Point comes just one year after a more significant leak was discovered in February 2009, when a one-and-a-half-inch hole in the underground piping caused by corrosion allowed about 100,000 gallons of water to escape. The failure of pipes which have not been visually inspected for thirty-six years could leave Indian Point and the communities surrounding it virtually defenseless.

At that time Congressman Hall wrote to the NRC stating, "This leak may demonstrate a systemic failure of the licensee and the Commission to inspect critical buried pipes in a manner sufficient to guarantee the public health and safety." He expressed serious concern that a significant leak could go undetected, and called the plant's current ability to detecting such problems "profoundly inadequate." However, the NRC still has not required the corroding pipes to be replaced.

Congressman Eliot Engel, who represents New York's 17th Congressional District said, "This steam leak is another example of Indian Point being well past its prime, a 40-year-old plant that

was designed to last only 35 years. Entergy, Indian Point's owner, knows this better than anyone which is why it is trying to spin off the nuclear power plants into a new corporation to rid itself of these jalopies. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission should not renew this decrepit plant's license."

Congresswoman Nita Lowey, who represents New York's 18th District said, "It is ironic that Indian Point received a pat on the back from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on the same day that one of the plant's underground pipes sprung a leak, requiring nearly an hour to contain. NRC should not be content with routine malfunctions at Indian Point, and New Yorkers deserve confidence the facility is being operated safely."

Congressman Maurice Hinchey, who represents New York's 22th District said, "This is just the latest in what seems to be a series of never ending problems at Indian Point. The infrastructure at and around the plant is in dire need of improvements in order to safeguard the public from radioactive leaks and other problems. The NRC shouldn't even be considering a license renewal unless the infrastructure concerns are fully addressed."

Tritium is a naturally occurring radioactive form of hydrogen that is produced in the atmosphere when cosmic rays collide with air molecules. Leaks of water with tritium have been discovered in underground piping at several other nuclear power plants across the country, including another plant owned by Entergy in Vermont. In addition, tritium contaminated water leaked from the plant's spent fuel pool at Indian Point in 2005.